Considerations concerning the African-Companies petition

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THE *African* Company have Petition'd the Houſe of Commons, to have their Monopoly confirm'd by [...] of Parliament: or in their own words, that a Bill may be brought in, to ſettle that Trade according to [...]Charter. Concerning which Petition, and that whole Matter, theſe things (in behalf of the People of *[...] land,*) are Humbly offer'd to Conſideration.

I. That all Engliſh Subjects have Right and Liberty to Trade to *Africa,* unleſs prohibited by Parliament.

II. That of this Liberty they have been deprived, and from this Trade they have been forcibly excluded, without Authority of Parliament, for many Years. And on the account of Trading thither, they have been perſecuted and tormented with all Violence and Cruelty. Many have been robb'd of their Ships and Goods, divers have been impriſoned, and ſo [...] have loſt their Lives.

III. Theſe things have been done by the *African* Company; by colour of an illegal Patent, which they call their C [...] ter. Which Company have carried on their Oppreſſions, with a high Hand, and in contempt and defiance of the l [...]

IV. If their Patent were legal, they would have no need of an Act of Parliament; for none would oppoſe a legal Pa [...].

V. The ingroſſing the *African* Trade by theſe Men, with the Excluſion of all others, is a perfect Monopoly to [...] [...] tents; and hath all the pernicious Effects of a Monopoly. Having been the ruin of Thouſands, with infinite Damage to the whole Kingdom. And two ſorts of People (but in whom the whole Kingdom is concerned) have ſuffered b [...] [...]his Monopoly in a more eſpecial manner; namely, the Woollen Manufacturers and the Plantations.

VI. They have the ſole Selling and ſole Buying of all that comes from, or goes to the Countries within their Patent; which contain a Sea-Coaſt of ſix or ſeven thouſand Miles. All that buy of them, muſt give what they pleaſe to deman [...] and all that ſell to them, muſt take what they pleaſe to give.

VII. It muſt be confeſt, that theſe Gentlemen of the Company, are grown more reaſonable then they have been formerly. For as for the very remote Countries toward the Caſe of Good Hope (which have neither Gold, nor good Negroes, nor any that is good;) they are now content, for quietneſs ſake, that the People of *England* be permitted to Trade to them. But the

Trade to the Gold Coaſt, and other good Places, they think is too dainty a Morſel for ſuch Cattel, and is fit for none but Projectors.

VIII. My Lord *Coke* tell us, that all Monopolies have ſpecious pretences of the Publick Good. And ſo has this. But it can be plainly made out, that their pretences are falſe and frivolous. Whereas the reaſon muſt be very ſtrong, and the matters very well proved and very evident, that ſhall induce a Houſe of Commons to ſet up a Monopoly; and to prejudice the whole People of *England* whom they Repreſent, in favour and for the advantage of a few Men.

IX. The *African* Company, during the late Reigns, was above the Law. But now the Law hath broke in upon them; and they have been Sued, and have paid great Damages, for Wrongs done by colour of their Patent. Nor dare they now commit the like Outrages; nor uſe their Fellow Subjects as Enemies, if they find them in the *African* Trade. So that their excluding Power being gone, their Monopoly muſt ſink and periſh. For the excluding Power is the life of Monopoly. Wherefore in this deſperate Caſe, they uſe a deſperate Remedy, and flie to the Parliament for help.

X. This is the firſt Monopoly, that ever was brought to a Parliament to be confirm'd. Parliaments do not uſe to confirm or countenance illegal Projects, but rather to puniſh the Projectors. But theſe Men have gone ſo long without Puniſhment, that now they pretend to favours.

XI. Theſe men have exerciſed an illegal Authority for Thirty Years, and now they would have it made legal. If an Act of Parliament be neceſſary now, it was neceſſary Thirty Years ago; and why did not they get one then? Either they deſpair'd to get it, or they ſcorn'd to take it.

XII. The *Turkey* Trade is properouſly carried on by a regulated Company, without a Joint-ſtock or Forts. And nothing hinders but that the *African* Trade might be carried on in like manner. Nay we Trade ſafely even with the Pirates of *Algier, Tripoli,* and *Tunis,* who are the worſt of Infidels. There is no Nation ſo Wicked, ſo Wild, and Barbarous; but that they will well-come and protect fair *Traders* that come to them; it being for their own benefit.

XIII. But if Forts be found or thought neceſſary, they may be maintain'd without the odious Expedient of a Monopoly. For a regulated Company may eaſily maintain them, by impoſitions upon Ships and Goods.

XIV. The *Eaſt-India* Company hath ſome probable Grounds both, but for the Legality and for the Neceſſity of it. But this *African* Company hath none.

XV. Were the Trade to *Africa* laid open, and Ships permitted to go, we ſhould certainly furniſh the *Spaniards* with Negroes for ready Money. Whereby both Nations would reap great advantage; the *Spaniards* by having the Negroes, and the People of *England* by having the Money.

Suppoſe ſome Men ſhould get a Patent to incloſe a Common: which accordingly they do incloſe, and hold it many years by ſtrong hand. But at laſt the Law breaks in upon them, and they can hold it no longer. Would a Parliament now confirm thoſe Men in their Uſurpation, if they ſhould have the confidence to ask it? Yet perhaps they might ſay, that they have been at great charge in improving the Land, and preſerving it from Inundations, and likewiſe in Building upon it (all which things are for the Publick Good;) and that they ſhall be great Sufferers, if their Incloſure be thrown [...]pen. And perhaps they might offer, (as the *African* Company does now;) that the Commoners, ſince they are ſo trouble [...]ome, ſhall have ſome Out-Skirt of the Land that's good for little, they keeping the beſt and greateſt part themſelves. Let not this Suppoſition ſeem ſorrain or impertinent, for it comes near the preſent Caſe. 'Tis the ſame thing to ingroſ [...] Trade, as to incloſe a Common.

Information about this book

Title statement

Considerations concerning the African-Companies petition

Edition statement

1698

Publication

Publisher
Text Creation Partnership,
Place of publication
Ann Arbor, MI ; Oxford (UK) :
Date
2011-04 (EEBO-TCP Phase 2).
ID [DLPS]
A34347
ID [STC]
Wing C5908A
ID [STC]
ESTC R6813
ID [EEBO-CITATION]
11894477
ID [OCLC]
ocm 11894477
ID [VID]
50542
Availability

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Series

Early English books online.

Notes

(EEBO-TCP ; phase 2, no. A34347)

Transcribed from: (Early English Books Online ; image set 50542)

Images scanned from microfilm: (Early English books, 1641-1700 ; 23:11)

Source

— Considerations concerning the African-Companies petition,

Extent

1 sheet ([1] p.)

s.n.,. [London :: 1698]. (Place and date of publication from Wing.)

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Created by converting TCP files to TEI P5 using tcp2tei.xsl, TEI @ Oxford.

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